



# Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
01/05/11

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## **AUGUSTA MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO STEALING FEDERAL FUNDS INTENDED TO PAY FOR MEALS FOR LOW-INCOME CHILDREN**

**SAVANNAH, GA:** BERNARD WALKER, 44, of Augusta, Georgia pleaded guilty today before United States District Court Judge Dudley H. Bowen, Jr. to fraudulently obtaining checks worth tens of thousands of dollars from a federally-funded, not-for-profit organization located in Augusta, Georgia and then laundering that money through businesses located in Waynesboro, Georgia. Evidence presented at today's guilty plea hearing showed that WALKER committed these crimes over a span of two and a half years while he was a nutrition specialist for the Central Savannah River Area Economic Opportunity Authority and was responsible for providing meals for the low-income children who were enrolled in Head Start programs in approximately eleven counties in the Augusta, Georgia area. In addition to pleading guilty today, WALKER also agreed to forfeit two automobiles, a BMW 528I and an Audi A6 Quattro that he purchased with the proceeds of his thefts.

United States Attorney Edward J. Tarver said, "Disadvantaged children who participate in Head Start programs in the Augusta, Georgia area are the beneficiaries of millions of dollars in federal funding. Taxpayers expect that their tax dollars will be used to buy meals for hungry children and not stolen to finance this defendant's flamboyant lifestyle. Today's convictions demonstrate that the U.S. Attorney's Office will use every available resource to not only put those who engage in such fraudulent behavior in Time-Out, but also take away their toys."

The theft count to which WALKER pleaded guilty carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000, while the money laundering count to which WALKER also pleaded guilty carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. The date for WALKER's sentencing hearing has not yet been scheduled.

WALKER's convictions arise out of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Offices of Inspector General for the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services. Assistant United States Attorney David M. Stewart is prosecuting the case.